

Drifting

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Summary: It's been two years since the end of the war. Former co-pilots Hiccup and Jack are as close as ever, and Astrid thinks it's finally time to give her best friend the happiness he deserves. Pacific Rim AU. Hijack.

Drifting

**\*\*Author's Note\*\***: I'll be borrowing several plot elements from Pacific Rim, but I won't follow the events of the movie exactly. Sorry in advance for any confusion. I'll clear things up in the Author's Note at the end. Please enjoy!

**\*\*Disclaimer\*\***: I do not own Rise of the Guardians, How to Train Your Dragon or Pacific Rim.

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><p><strong>Drifting<strong>

The lights turned off with a flick of a switch, leaving only the streetlamps illuminating the dark rows of houses under the cloudy moonless sky. Hiccup rolled the garage door shut and checked that it was locked securely before heading back into the house. It was late and he made sure to move as quietly as possible to avoid waking Astrid, but his efforts were unnecessary for he found the blonde sitting at the dining table with a half-drunk cup of tea, reading a book while waiting for him to come home.

"How'd it go?" she asked casually, taking a small sip of her drink before glancing at him.

"Great!" Hiccup removed his leather jacket and tossed it over the back of the couch. "We went to that small diner near the old military school. It took a while to drive there, but Jack was craving for their cheeseburgers, so I guess it was worth it."

"Did you two really take six hours for dinner?"

"We caught a movie and stopped by the park on the way back. The stars were beautiful tonight," he grinned.

"Hiccup..."

"Yeah?"

Astrid paused, her throat closing up at the sight of just how happy her best friend looked, and she shook her head with a smile.

"Nothing. Go to sleep, I'll see you in the morning." The blonde received a confused shrug in reply, but she remained silent as Hiccup bade her goodnight and climbed the stairs to his room.

She cringed as the distant sound of violent coughing reached her ears, and when she entered the bathroom to prepare for bed a while later, she tried to pretend she didn't see the faint droplets of blood splattered on the white tiled floor.

\* \* \*

><p>"Sky Guardian, incoming Kaiju at your ten o'clock. This one's pretty fast, so watch your backs."<p>

"Copy that," Jack said before smirking at his co-pilot. "You ready?"

"Born ready. Let's do this!" Hiccup returned the confident look, nodding with determination.

They moved as one, shifting into a defensive stance and bracing themselves for the attack. Sure enough, Nightmare leapt out of the sea and lunged towards them, but it was quickly thrown back underwater as Sky Guardian grabbed its head and twisted it to the side. The Kaiju resurfaced in no time, only slightly disoriented, and roared angrily at them.

"Stubborn bastard. Sound familiar, Hic?"

"Very funny, asshole. Now let's fry this thing and get it over with."

"We fried the last one, remember?"

"Fine, let's freeze this thing and get it over with," the brunet corrected with a roll of his eyes.

"Oh hell yeah!" Jack gleefully deployed the metal rod connected to Sky Guardian's hip and activated it, causing it to extend into a bo staff with a fraction of its length at the tips glowing brightly. The Jaeger swung its weapon upwards just in time to block Nightmare's claws as it took a swipe at them. With a loud battle cry, the two men fought with well-practiced techniques, countering the Kaiju's moves and driving it further away from the coastline. When it prepared to jump them again, they saw an opening and jabbed its chest with one end of the staff, piercing its skin with the lasers lined at the sides.

"Ice storm!" they yelled together, triggering the mechanism that connected their Jaeger's coolant line to her weapon. A large jet of liquid nitrogen was sprayed onto Nightmare's insides, eliciting a loud screech of pain. The Kaiju appeared to be defeated, but then it grabbed the staff impaling it and yanked, pulling Sky Guardian towards it. Her pilots shouted in surprise, their cockpit narrowly avoiding getting smashed by the large horns mounted on its head. Nightmare snarled and snapped its teeth, pulling them closer to crush their armor.

Hiccup knew that they had to end it quickly. Prolonging the fight would only create unnecessary risks and he had no intention of endangering his partner or their Jaeger. Pressing several buttons on the console, he started to power up the canon built into Sky Guardian's chest. "Plasma blast!" he commanded, unleashing a purple burst of energy directly into Nightmare's mouth. The Kaiju shrieked one final time before falling limp and collapsing into the sea, sinking under the black waves.

"Yeah, baby!" the brunet cheered and gave his co-pilot a fist bump.

Jack laughed weakly. "Freeze and fry, huh?" he panted in exhaustion, shaking his head. "Come on, let's get back to base."

\* \* \*

><p>"Hiccup, hang on a sec."<p>

The brunet in question paused in his steps and turned around, one hand falling away from the doorknob as he raised a questioning brow at his concerned housemate. "What is it?"

"You don't look too good. Maybe you should stay in today," Astrid said worriedly.

"I'm okay, really!" Hiccup forced a smile on his face to assure her, but he could tell that his best friend wasn't buying it. "I'll only be out for a while."

"You've been gone longer and longer each time," she retorted with a frown. "You just saw Jack two days ago, I'm sure he can wait till next week -"

"Astrid, you don't understand. I need to see him. I promised," Hiccup argued, looking slightly desperate as his fingers began to fiddle with his keys.

"I know, but Jack wouldn't want you to kill yourself -"

"I'm fine! I just need to -"

Hiccup was suddenly interrupted by a round of vicious coughing, his whole body trembling with the sheer force of each hack. Astrid was immediately by his side as she steadied him and rubbed his back, and her blue eyes widened in alarm when she caught sight of a dark splotch of blood on the brunet's palm as he uncovered his mouth. He panted heavily and wheezed for breath, wiping his hands on the side of his jeans.

"I'll be f-fine," he rasped stubbornly, shaking her off weakly.  
"D-don't wait up."

The front door slammed shut with a bang, leaving the blonde staring after him with curled fists and a frustrated scowl.

\* \* \*

><p>"You've got that look on your face. Is everything alright?"<p>

"Astrid's being a mother hen again. She says I'm going to get myself killed seeing you every week."

"What, does she think you're piloting Night Fury to my base or something?"

Hiccup laughed softly and shook his head. "She's the one after my ass actually, blaming me for being so difficult to find a co-pilot for. It's not my fault her list of candidates aren't drift compatible with me."

"You're one of a kind, Hic. And you tell her that I'm the only one allowed near your ass, got it?"

"Oh, Astrid gets it, trust me. It's Dagur I'm worried about," the brunet muttered darkly, watching his white-haired boyfriend bristle slightly on the computer screen.

"Man, that guy's still giving you problems?"

"He wants to be my co-pilot, but we're not drift compatible. And even if we were, there's no way I'm getting inside that head of his," Hiccup declared firmly. "Astrid's doing her best to match him up with other candidates, but he insists he's perfect for me."

There was a pregnant pause as Jack looked away with a sigh. "We shouldn't be separated like this," he whispered sadly. "We're drift compatible, I know it. We can pilot Winter Light together and free up Night Fury for the others. It makes sense especially since they're running out of candidates to match us up with." Jack shot him a pleading look. "If you could just come over -"

"Gobber won't let me off the base, Jack. And you can't leave because there aren't enough pilots in your area. It's bad enough that I have to sneak out to meet you. My dad will murder me if he finds out, you know that."

"Hiccup -"

"Believe me, I hate this as much as you do," the brunet frowned, his shoulders sagging heavily. "But unless they decide to merge bases or something, there's no way we can -"

A shrill alarm echoed through the halls, startling the two men from their conversation. Hiccup looked up to see red lights flashing brightly overhead, signalling the start of another Kaiju attack. He stood up hurriedly and began to pack his things.

"I gotta go. Astrid needs me in the control room."

"Who are they sending this time?"

"The Dunbroch triplets, I think. Said they had a new formation they wanted to try out. We'll probably have Guy and Eep on standby just in case something goes wrong."

Jack gave him a warm smile and pressed his palm against the screen. "Stay safe. I love you."

Returning the heartfelt gesture, Hiccup nodded and smiled back at him. "I love you too."

\* \* \*

><p>The house was silent as Hiccup closed the front door behind him and locked weary green eyes with Astrid, who was sitting at the dining table waiting for him, again. He took one step towards the stairs and nearly collapsed onto the floor, but he gripped the edge of the couch to hold himself up, shaking his head when Astrid moved to help him.<p>

"Not one word," he grunted, stopping her in her tracks. Leaning heavily on his right side, the brunet practically hobbled up to his room, missing the worried look Astrid shot after his retreating back.

\* \* \*

><p>The left half of Sky Guardian's hull exploded inwards as the latest Category 4 Kaiju, codenamed Tailbone, erupted from the dark waters of the North Atlantic ocean and smashed its heavily armored tail against the Jaeger.<p>

Hiccup's vision went white for a moment before his senses started to return to him, and amid all the yelling over the comms and the frantic screams next to him, he suddenly became aware of the excruciating pain in his left leg. Red warnings began to flash on the screens as the AI alerted them to the damage done by the massive club-like appendage, not excluding the fact that Sky Guardian had effectively become immobilized due to the injuries sustained by one of her pilots.

"Sky Guardian, on your left!"

Despite the phantom pain he experienced from being neurally connected to his partner, Jack had the presence of mind to shift their Jaeger just in time to see electric whips shooting out from behind them to restrain the Kaiju that was gearing up for another attack. Those monsters were growing more and more formidable with each progressive wave. Not only were they bigger and faster, they had also learned to target the Jaegers' hulls to take out their pilots early in the fight. It now took at least two Jaegers to kill a Kaiju, but Dream Catcher seemed to be holding her own against Tailbone, so Jack quickly disconnected himself and limped over to his co-pilot.

"Hiccup!" he cried, carefully unplugging the brunet before lowering them both to the ground. He removed their helmets and cradled Hiccup's head to his chest, choking out a strangled sob as the other

gasped weakly for breath. "Shh shh... It's okay, you're okay. I'm right here with you..."

"Jack... It h-hurts..." Hiccup whimpered softly, his green eyes screwed shut in pain. But Jack could only hold his hand and whisper reassurances in his ear, keeping an eye on the ongoing battle to avoid the sight of Hiccup's injury. The shrapnel from the explosion had pierced through his suit, leaving a slowly growing pool of blood under his left leg. Hiccup needed immediate medical attention, but it wasn't safe for the helicopters to be sent out until the Kaiju was taken care of.

As if on cue, Tailbone let out a deafening roar as Dream Catcher sliced off its tail and slammed it into the Kaiju's head like a baseball bat, crushing its thick skull into pieces and sending it on a one way trip to the ocean floor. Jack laughed in relief and turned to the still figure on his lap. "Look Hic, Punzie and Flynn did it! They -"

The blood drained out of Jack's face when he realized that the brunet was no longer responding to him. He was still breathing, but his hand had gone limp and as much as Jack shook him or called his name, he wouldn't wake up.

"HICCUP!"

\* \* \*

><p>Astrid's eyes flew open at the sounds of hoarse screaming and she instinctively reached for the handgun hidden under her pillow. It took her a few seconds to realize that they were coming from next door, and she let out a curse before throwing off the covers and rushing over to Hiccup's room.<p>

\* \* \*

><p>"Jack, I..."<p>

"I know."

Hiccup shook his head fiercely as fat tears began to well up in his eyes. "Don't leave me... P-please..." he begged, his crutches toppling over to the floor as he released them to embrace Jack for what could possibly be the last time.

"Frost," Commander Pitch said quietly. He stood near the hanger doors with a helmet in his hand, all suited up and ready to enter Sky Guardian with Jack for the final mission. The white-haired man nodded in understanding and reluctantly pulled back from the hug, leaving Hiccup clutching his arms desperately.

"I'll come back," he promised, even though they both knew there was little to zero chance that he would return alive. "Wait for me, alright?"

"But -"

Jack silenced him with a fervent kiss, giving himself five seconds to savor the moment, to forget everything but the brunet in front of him. For those precious few seconds, there was nothing but him and

Hiccup in each other's arms, the world be damned. He poured every ounce of emotion into the kiss, and when they finally broke apart, he cupped Hiccup's cheeks and brushed his thumbs over the countless freckles dotting them. "Remember, you can always find me in the Drift," he whispered, smiling at him tenderly before letting go. "I love you."

"I love you too," Hiccup said tearfully, bracing himself against the wall as he watched the pair walk away. The brunet scrubbed his face with his sleeve, refusing to let the tears fall. He held them in when the metal doors slid shut behind Jack and the Commander, when Anna reported the first Category 5 Kaiju emerging from the portal, and even when Sky Guardian's signal disappeared into the breach.

They fell only when two lifepods rose from the depths of the Pacific ocean, encasing the unmoving bodies inside.

\* \* \*

><p>Breakfast proceeded as usual with the two housemates sitting on opposite ends of the dining table.<p>

Astrid discreetly looked up from the newspaper to check on Hiccup, noticing the dark bags under his eyes and the sluggish way he was chewing on his toast. The brunet had been staying out later and more often, and his body's exhaustion had affected his mind to the extent that he had started to chase the black rabbit in his dreams and fall into the realm of nightmares. She knew he would stubbornly pretend that last night never happened, that he hadn't woken up to an empty pail of water and his best friend's worried face. At first she thought that seeing Jack weekly - now daily - would help Hiccup recover, but it seemed that his condition was only getting worse. They both knew that Hiccup wasn't going to last much longer, as hard as he tried to hide it.

No words were exchanged as Hiccup pushed away his uneaten meal and stood up, grabbing his keys before heading to the garage. He wobbled slightly on the way to the door and suddenly found his right arm slung over Astrid's shoulders as she helped him outside.

"What are you -"

"Shush. I'm coming with you this time."

"But there's only one -"

"Not like that. I'll just be there to see you off."

"...Okay."

The last time Astrid had stepped foot into the garage, it was strewn with old parts from the now abandoned Shatterdome. She could make no sense of the mess, but Hiccup clearly knew what he was doing when he started putting them together to build something that he claimed would allow him to see Jack again. There was an old recliner sitting in the middle of the garage, hooked up to several machines on the tables at the side. Hiccup directed her towards them and switched them on, lighting up the place with an array of green and blue lights.

"Thanks Astrid. Just set me down here and I'll be good to go," Hiccup nodded towards the recliner, where a familiar helmet hung from one of its arms. The brunet let out a startled gasp when Astrid abruptly spun him around and engulfed him in a tight hug, and he could have sworn he felt his best friend shaking slightly as he returned the gesture. "W-whoa, what's this for?"

"Nothing," Astrid sniffed, giving him one last squeeze before pulling away with a teary smile. "Say 'hi' to Jack for me, will you?"

"Uh, sure...?"

The blonde laughed lightly at his confused look and helped him onto the recliner, pulling the helmet over his head. Hiccup leaned back and relaxed, closing his eyes before pressing a button on the remote attached to the side. Astrid kept a close eye on him and waited patiently, watching sadly as a beeping sound indicated that he had entered the Drift. She smiled softly when a peaceful look washed over Hiccup's face, and she took a moment to wonder what memory he was reliving. Whatever it was, she knew that Jack was right there with him.

Gently caressing a freckled cheek, Astrid walked towards the machine housing the main controls, her eyes never leaving her best friend's face. "Goodbye Hiccup," she whispered, choking back tears as she reached for the power switch and turned it off.

Hiccup's body convulsed once, twice, then it went still, and a faint smile lingered on his lips even though his chest wasn't rising anymore.

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><p><strong>Author's Note<strong>: The sections in this story alternate between present time and Hiccup's drift memories. While the events in the former (1, 3, 5, 7, 9) are in chronological order, the latter starts with 4 (the video call), followed by 2 (fighting a Kaiju), then 6 (Hiccup's injury), and 8 (the final battle). The last two drift memories are experienced in Hiccup's nightmares, and 'chasing the black rabbit' (something I came up with) refers to getting drawn into a dark memory, in this case.

Drift memories - Despite being in a relationship, cadets Jack and Hiccup are stationed in different bases. Neither of them can find co-pilots who are drift compatible, but they are eventually reunited when their respective bases merge due to lack of funding. The Jaeger assigned to them is Sky Guardian, though both of them had their personal favorite - Night Fury and Winter Light - in their own base. Hiccup gets injured during a battle, and since Sky Guardian is one of the last Jaegers remaining, Jack partners up with Commander Pitch to destroy the breach. The mission is successful, but neither of them make it back alive.

Present time - Hiccup built his own drift machine using parts salvaged from the war and he goes to see Jack regularly by reliving memories of their time together. The machine is powered by a small reactor and although he isn't receiving large doses of radiation from being connected by himself, Hiccup is still slowly dying from the exposure. He has started to drift longer and more often, expediting the process and making his body break down even faster. Astrid can't



bear to see her best friend waste away and decides to unplug him during one of his 'visits', severing the connection between his mind and body. This essentially kills him, but it leaves his consciousness in the Drift to be with Jack forever.

Thanks for reading :)

End  
file.